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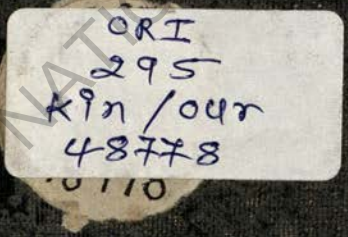
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PARSI PRIESTS

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OUR
PARSI FRIENDS

BY

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C. A. KINCAID, C.V.O., I.C.S.,

AUTHOR OF:

Deccan Nursery Tales; History of the Maratha People, Vol. I & II; The Indian Heroes; Tales from the Indian Epics; Tales of King Vikrama; Tales of the Saints of Pandharpur; Tales of Old Sind; The Anchorite; Shri Krishna of Dwarka; The Tale of the Tulsi Plant; The Hindu Gods and how to recognise them; Ishtur Phakde; The Outlaws of Kathiawar; Tales from the Indian Drama; Teachers of India; Folk Tales of Sind and Guzarat.

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BOMBAY
THE TIMES OF INDIA PRESS
1929

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Books by the same Author

Deccan Nursery Tales	*Macmillan & Co.*
History of the Maratha People, Vols. I & II	*Oxford University Press.*
The Indian Heroes	*Do.*
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Shri Krishna of Dwarka	*Messrs. Tarapurwala & Co.*
The Tale of the Tulsi Plant ..	*Do.*
Folk Tales of Sind & Guzarat ..	*Do.*
The Hindu Gods and how to recognise them	*Times of India Press.*
Ishtur Phakde	*Do.*
The Outlaws of Kathiawar ..	*Do.*

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TO
THE PARSI COMMUNITY OF INDIA
THIS LITTLE BOOK
IS
RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED.

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Published 1922.
Reprinted 1929.

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PREFACE

THE cordial reception which the public of Bombay have extended to my little book "Hindu Gods and how to recognise them" has encouraged me to offer for their acceptance this little companion work "Our Parsi Friends."

To accomplish my task, I have studied the works of Anquetil du Perron, M. Darmesteter, Professor Jackson, Mr. Karaka and Dr. Dhalla. I have also read the Zarathustnama closely. Lastly, I was so fortunate as to receive the invaluable aid of Shams-ul-ulema Dr. Modi, C.I.E., the Secretary of the Parsi Panchayat, than whom no greater authority exists. He has supplied me with copies of his own learned works and I have drawn from them abundantly. He has gone through my book, while in manuscript, making frequent and valuable suggestions and important corrections. Lastly, he has consented to write a foreword to it. Fortified by his knowledge and ungrudging aid, I now offer this little work to the public. It is my humble hope that it may in some slight degree enable my own people to understand better and apprecite the Parsis, the most friendly and, as was shown during the riots of November 1921, the most loyal among the communities of our great city.

C. A. K.

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FOREWORD

I HAVE accepted with much pleasure the kind invitation of the Honourable Mr. Justice Kincaid to write a foreword to this little volume. It is an honour as well as a pleasure to be associated with the good work of a scholar, who has done so much to introduce the East to the West.

What struck me first about Mr. Kincaid's book was its title "Our Parsi Friends." Yes; the Parsis are the friends of the British; and why are they? Because they (the Parsis) are the friends of India and know that the British are the friends of India. The Parsi Dastur, who headed the first band of Parsis that landed on the hospitable shores of India after the Arab conquest of Persia, said to the ruling prince of Sanjan, in the words of the Persian Kisseh-i-Sanjan (The story of Sanjan):

Hamê Hindûstânrâ yâr bâshîm
(We will be friends to the whole of India).

The Parsi community has done its best to be true to this promise of being friendly to Hindustan. It has played an active part in the material, intellectual and political advancement of the country. It has thought and still thinks that the British also have been the friends of India. Those great sons of India of the past generation—Ranade, Telang and Pherozeshah Mehta—believed that it was by the hands of Providence that a small island in the West ruled over a great country, well-nigh a continent, thousands of miles away, and gave to India justice and greatly needed peace. The British had and may have their faults—no human

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institution is perfect—and the Parsis have worked and will work to constitutionally point out the faults. But they believe that notwithstanding their faults, the British have, by the Grace of Ahura Mazda, been good friends of India and have advanced its material, intellectual and political growth. So it is, that the Parsis, whose ancestors had promised to be friendly to India, have been friendly to the British, who they think, have been friendly to India.

Coming to the subject-matter of the book, we welcome the laudable attempts of our learned author to make his community understand the various Indian communities. In that sense, he properly calls this volume a companion to his "Hindu Gods" published two years ago. In speaking of a community not one's own, it is always hard to describe well its religion and social customs. Our author in his chapter on religion, very modestly admits that difficulty, but he has handled his subject well and gives his own people a bird's-eye view of the principal tenets of the religion of the Parsis and of their social and religious customs.

In his chapter on Zoroaster, Mr. Kincaid gives an account of the extraordinary occurrences which old traditions connect with the birth of the infant Zoroaster. These remind us of similar occurrences in the lives of Buddha and Christ. They are ordinarily spoken of as miracles. A Parsi author himself speaks of them as Mojejât-i-Zarthoshti, *i.e.*, the Miracles of Zoroaster. But, I think, the writer of the Pahlavi Dinkard very properly speaks of them as 'wonders.' In this matter many a think-

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ing mind in all communities may take his stand on the belief that " there is nothing supernatural in the world." What is supposed to be supernatural is in its true and proper bearing all natural. Remove the cobwebs and what remains is nothing but natural. Some of the wonders connected with the name of Zoroaster are not miracles of his own making, *i.e.*, it is not he who professed to perform them as miracles. The unusual ways in which his infant life was saved have been taken as miracles. In the account of the wonderful ways in which the Prophet's life was saved, we read, as it were, the words of Euripides :—

" For when God wills to save all things he'll bend
" To serve as instruments to work his end."

Similarly, another great writer says :—

" If God design to save you, safe you are,
" Though sailing in mid-ocean on a mat."

It is worth noting that there are several circumstances in the Life of Zoroaster, described by our author, that are referred to by classical and other writers also. For example, the extraordinary occurrence of Zoroaster laughing immediately after birth, while all children weep, is mentioned in Pliny (Natural History Bk. VIII, Chap. 15). Again the Scandinavian Edda refers to it. I remember that when I was at Stockholm in 1889 to attend the Oriental Congress that met there, I was specially invited to attend a performance of the Edda, because this extraordinary event of the laughing of my Prophet at his birth was referred to in it. Without entering into the question whether such a thing may

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occur or not, we may say that we find, as it were a reflex of this in the statement that the birth of Zoroaster made all nature laugh and rejoice. We read in the Farvardin Yasht (ss. 93-94) " By his (Zoroaster's) birth and growth, water and plants gladdened. By his birth and growth, water and plants increased in growth. By his birth and growth, the whole of the creation of the Good Spirit shouted cries of joy." It shouted " Hail to us ! that Zoroaster, an Athravan has been born for us." We read a parallel to this about the infant Christ in an article entitled ' Exultet terra ' by Mr. B. E. P. R. Dowling " This Advent antiphons foretold how by Christ's coming the desert and the byeways shall rejoice and the solitude be glad and blossom as a lily. Budding, it shall burgeon and exult praising with exceeding joy."

At the end of his chapter on the Zend Avesta, Mr. Kincaid says of the Parsi doctrines and faith that " for three thousand years they have sustained the worshippers of Ahura Mazda." This reminds us of a question Professor Max Muller asked about half a century ago. He said :

" Here is a religion, one of the most ancient of the world, once the State religion of the most powerful empire, driven away from its native soil, and deprived of political influence, without even the prestige of a powerful or enlightened priesthood, and yet professed by a handful of exiles—men of wealth, intelligence, and moral worth in Western India, with an unhesitating fervour such as is seldom to be found in larger religious

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communities. It is well worth the earnest endeavour of the philosopher and the divine to discover, if possible, the spell by which this apparently effete religion continues to command the attachment of the enlightened Parsees of India and makes them turn a deaf ear to the allurements of the Brahamanic worship and the earnest appeals of Christian missionaries."

I think the spell can be discovered and explained thus: All religions have what is called stable elements. The stable elements form the principal tenets of the religion. The Parsis have been *tenaciously* holding the stable elements, but in the matter of the unstable elements they adapt themselves to the circumstances of time, place and conditions. In spite of their conservatism they have been adapting themselves to changed circumstances, changing their ways of living, their dress and even their customs.

As the last word of this foreword, I wish all godspeed to this volume and wish that it may lead to a better understanding of my people by all those who read it.

JIVANJI JAMSHEDJI MODI.

MEHTA LODGE, CHAKALA, ANDHERI.
6th August 1922.

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CHAPTER I.

Our Parsi Friends—Their History.

THE Government of India have no better friends than the small Parsi community of Bombay and Gujarat. Yet the English dwellers in their midst know little or nothing of their history or beliefs. The subject is one of absorbing interest. It takes the reader back beyond the days when the Spartan hoplites forced the breastworks of Platæa or the eloquence of Pericles first resounded in the Athenian Ecclesia, back to the founder of modern governments, the inventor of centralised administration, the greatest man of all antiquity—to Cyrus, the king, the Achæmenian.

Students of classical history will remember how first of his race Cyrus imposed the yoke of the Persians on the Medes and then on all Asia Minor; how Cambyses and Darius imposed it on Egypt, Syria, Mesopotamia and Lybia, until at last, to use the words of Xenophon, the realm of the great king was so vast that to the north of it men could not live because of the cold and to the south because of the heat. This vast empire more than a hundred years later fell into the feeble hands of Darius Codomannus, when it was destroyed by the Macedonian king Alexander. On Alexander's death Persia fell with Syria to his general Seleucus; and for a time it seemed as if Persia like Syria and Egypt would be completely Hellenised. The fratricidal wars of the Greek kingdoms gave to the inhabitants of a single

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province of the empire of Darius a chance of rebellion. Under Arsaces they secured their independence. He founded the kingdom of the Parthians, known to classical students by their successive victories over Crassus and Antony. The Parthian kingdom endured until 227 A.D. when a Persian prince called Ardeshir, who claimed to be sprung from Darius Hystaspes, overthrew the Parthians and restored the ancient glories of the Achæmenian kings. The Sassanide dynasty fills the closing volumes of Gibbon. One monarch Shapur took prisoner the emperor Valerian and defeated the emperor Julian. Another monarch Noshirvan-i-Adal is still renowned as the justest of Eastern kings. The Sassanide dominion met its end at the hands of the Arabs. Divided among themselves between two warring factions, the Persians were overthrown first at Kadesia (A.D. 636) and afterwards at Nahawand. In the end the last Sassanian king Yazdagird was, as he hid from his pursuers, treacherously murdered by a miller of Merv. Hitherto the Persians had followed Mazdaism, which with Hellenism and Hinduism was one of the three great Aryan religions of the world. The Arabs in the full fury of their fanaticism enforced Islam on the conquered race. The bulk of the conquered submitted readily enough. But a chosen few fled to the mountains of Khorassan, where they resisted the new Semitic faith for a hundred years. Driven from their stronghold, a section fled to Hormuz at the mouth of the Persian Gulf. But even there they were not safe from their Musalman enemies. They embarked

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in ships and sailed for India. They first landed at Div, an island off the coast of Kathiawar. Nineteen years later at the bidding of a priest, learned in the stars, they resolved to change their dwelling place. A violent storm struck their ships but they prayed to Ahura Mazda, the God of Cyrus and Darius, and he heard them. The storm abated and the sea-tossed vessels reached Sanjan, then ruled over by "king Jadi Rana," probably the Rajput governor of the district. Alarmed at the descent of a band of foreigners, he sent to enquire their religion and customs. By this time the Parsis had acquired some knowledge of Hindu manners and by a series of slokas or stanzas, which laid stress on those usages that resembled those of the Hindus, they led the king to believe that there was in their practices, but little difference between him and them. Jadi Rana greatly pleased allowed the new-comers to disembark and settle in a large tract of land not far from modern Sanjan. He made them, however, promise three things—(1) to adopt the language of Guzarat, (2) to dress their women like Hindus, (3) to give up the use of arms. They had no alternative but to comply. To show their gratitude to Ahura Mazda, who had protected them from the storm, they erected their first fire temple. With generous tolerance the Hindus helped them to erect it. The date of this event is disputed, but may have been some time in the 8th century A.D. From Sanjan the Parsis spread to Cambay, Ankleshwar, Variav and Broach. In 1142 A.D. a band of Parsis emigrated to Naosari or New Sari, called

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after Sari in the Persian province of Mazendaran. By this time, however, their old enemies the Musulmans were sweeping across India. In about 1490 Mahommed Begada attacked Sanjan. The Parsis remembering with gratitude the kindness of Jadi Rana's welcome, furnished 1,400 men under one Ardeshir to defend it. The leader and his men alike perished on the battlefield. The conquerors of Guzarat treated the Parsis with greater mildness than the conquerors of Persia had done. The Parsis increased and multiplied and spread to Surat which they helped to make one of the great ports of India and to Bombay, where they seem to have settled about the same time as the English. There in 1673 A.D. they erected in the midst of a vast solitude the first of those Towers of Silence which, surrounded on all sides by fashionable houses, now crown the summit of Malabar Hill.

In the meantime the other section of those who had refused to accept Islam were in Persia dwindling away under persecution. They had lost all trace of the fugitives to India and wondered often whether any of their co-religionists still existed. In the fifteenth century one Nariman Hoshang, at the cost of a rich Parsi of Naosari, Changa Asa, went to Persia and succeeded in reaching the wretched remnant of his co-religionists. They had endured, to use their own phrase, such sufferings as they had not known under the world's three greatest sinners Zohak, Afrasiab-i-Tur and Alexander. They were, therefore, overjoyed to find that a prosperous community of their brethren lived in India.

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From that time on the relations between the Guebres of Persia and the Parsis of India were continually renewed and the latter have at times appealed to the Persian Government—unhappily without much success—to relieve the sufferings and persecutions of the former. If, however, the Parsis have failed to raise the status of the Guebres of Iran, they have succeeded by their energy, their sobriety, and their talents in bringing great prosperity to themselves. Their success in every branch of life is known to all. They have furnished engineers, politicians, barristers, solicitors, judges of the High Court and a member of the Executive Council. Their influence is strangely out of proportion to their numbers. The Parsis of India number about 100,000 only. Still they far out-number their brethren in Persia, who have dwindled to only 10,000 or 11,000. These two communities are all that are left of the vast multitude, who once believed in the great Aryan religion of Persia. To the Englishman the spectacle is at once strange and pathetic. Yet, if he looks into his own history, he will find therein that another great Aryan religion once as widely followed as that of Persia has been even more ruthlessly destroyed. The gods of Hellas in which his ancestors believed have fled for ever. Once they were worshipped from York to Trebizond. To-day they have not a single follower left. The triumph of the Galilean has been more complete even than that of the prophet of Mecca.

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CHAPTER II.

ZOROASTER.

THE word Zoroaster is derived from the Greeks. They wrote the word Zoroastres and then explained that it meant Astrothotes or "Starworshipper." According to M. Darmesteter the word enters into the category of names ending in "ushtra" or camel. "Zaratha" meant yellow. Thus Zarathustra meant the man with the yellow camels. It is probable that the literal meaning of the name had no connexion with the man to whom it was given, just as the Greek name Demosthenes was bestowed without any idea, that the bearer would derive his strength from the people.

The birthplace of Zoroaster is disputed. According to Dr. Modi the great prophet was born in a house on the bank of the river Daraz (the modern Darya in Azerbaizan). The river flowed from the mountain Ushidarena, now known as Sebalon or Sebilon. Zoroaster's father Pourushaspa hailed from Azerbaizan and his mother Dogdo from Amoi, a village in the province of Rai. All agree that Zoroaster's mother Dogdo was the most virtuous of women. It is said that from her earliest childhood, a halo shone round her head and face. This halo, which was but a sign of her inward spiritual grace, was misinterpreted by the people who dwelt in her village. They thought her a sorceress and treated her so badly that her father had to send her to Azerbaizan. Near her new home lived

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Paitiraspa, Zoroaster's grandfather. In due course she was betrothed to Paitiraspa's son, Pourushaspa.

According to legends* collected by Anquetil du Perron, Dogdo, when advanced in pregnancy, had a terrible dream. She fancied she saw a black cloud shaped like an eagle's wing, which covered the sky and hid the light. From this cloud fell a rain of lions, tigers, wolves, crocodiles and dragons. The fiercest of these terrible animals leapt upon Dogdo and tore her open, dragging out her embryo from within. But the unborn infant reassured Dogdo and told her that the monsters would not prevail against it.

As the infant spoke, Dogdo saw a mountain lit up with radiant sunshine descend from the sky. From a cavern in the mountain's side there came out a youth, bright as the moon on the fourteenth of the lunar month and clothed like king Jamshed in majesty and splendour. In his hands the youth held a shining branch and in the other the book of God. He threw the book at the beasts that threatened Dogdo. All vanished save three, a wolf, a lion and a tiger. The youth went up to them and struck them with the shining branch. Flames burst from them and they were utterly consumed. The youth then took the embryo and put it back in its mother's womb and bade her fear nothing, as God would guard the child. The earth awaited its coming. It would restore to the world the laws of God and in its time the lion and the lamb would drink from the same watering place. Then Dogdo awoke. When Dogdo's

* These legends are not in the Avesta, but are of much later date.

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child was born, it laughed instead of crying; and the arteries of its head throbbed so violently that they lifted up any hand placed upon them. From these signs all foretold the child's greatness and wisdom. At the time of Zoroaster's birth there were still some persons who followed the holy laws revealed to king Gayomart (the Iranian Adam, the father of all mankind) and others; but the majority of the world had been led astray by evil-minded magicians. These magicians resolved to destroy the infant boy before he threatened their power. They tried to burn him, but the fire treated the child no more harshly than if it had been sweet water. They threw the little boy under the feet of a herd of cattle; but a giant bull stood over him and protected him from the rest of the herd. They threw him into a she-wolf's lair, but the she-wolf dared not enter it; while two ewes came and gave him their milk.

When Zoroaster was seven years old, Pourushaspa sent him to learn the science of the time from a famous sage. So quickly did the saintly boy imbibe learning, that at twelve he was able to refute certain heretics and false teachers. When he was fifteen, Pourushaspa divided his clothing among his children. Zoroaster selected the kusti or girdle, the symbol of Mazdaism, thereby announcing that he intended to adopt the religious life. Between the 15th and 20th years of Zoroaster's life a terrible drought befell the countryside. He first exhausted his father's stocks of grain in trying to save the dying cattle. Afterwards he went to help a noble Iranian, the son of one Uryatodeh, who

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was doing his best to relieve the widespread distress.

At the age of twenty Zoroaster went to meditate on the mountain of Ushidarena, the source of the river Daraz, that flowed by his home. There he stayed for ten years. In these ten years he was vouchsafed no less than seven meetings with Ahura Mazda and his six Amesha spentas or archangels. Through Vohumana or Good Mind, Ahura Mazda revealed to Zoroaster his doctrines. Vohumana thus spoke to Zoroaster "Who are you? Of what lineage are you come? What is your dearest wish? What will you do during your life?" To Vohumana thus replied Zoroaster: "I am Zoroaster. I am of the Spitama house. My dearest wish is to attain Asha or righteousness. I long to know the wishes of the Yazatas or angels, so that knowing their desires, I may follow the path of virtue."

Strengthened by his visions of the All Wise and sustained by the teachings of Vohumana, Zoroaster descended from Ushidarena and began to teach the holy truths revealed to him. His strict views of life did not at first commend themselves to his hearers; and false priests and teachers, failing to win him to their cause, banded themselves together against him and clamoured for his blood. But he had a weapon against which they were powerless, namely, the Ahunavar, the sacred prayer, the Paternoster of the Zoroastrians. Nevertheless ten more weary years passed before he made his first disciple Maidhyo-Mah, his cousin. Two years later he set out for Balkh, for he had received from God's own lips the command to preach his laws to Vishtaspa or Gus-

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taspa, king of Iran. On hearing that Zoroaster had come to deliver to him a divine message, he summoned the wisest men of his court to test the newcomer. The test lasted for three days. At the end of them the wise men of the court were reduced to silence. The king was half persuaded and promised to read the Zend Avesta, the book in which Zoroaster had recorded the laws of Ahura Mazda, as they had fallen from his lips.

Unhappily the high nobles envied the favour shewn to Zoroaster. They caused to be placed in his room dead men's finger nails and bones and declared to Vishtaspa that Zoroaster passed the night in necromancies. The king had Zoroaster's house searched and found in it the evil things of which his enemies had spoken. He flung Zoroaster into a dungeon, wherein he languished seven days. On the eighth day the master of Vishtaspa's stables brought him word, that the legs of his favourite charger had disappeared inside its body. The king was in great distress and all Balkh in consternation. When Zoroaster heard from his jailor of the calamity, he told him that if the king would but release him, he would restore the horse to its former shape. The jailor told Vishtaspa, who sent for Zoroaster. The sage undertook to make the horse's legs grow again, provided that the king made him four promises. The first was that the king should definitely accept his teaching. The second and third were that his son Isfandiar (Spento data) and his queen Hutoshi or Atossa should do likewise. The fourth was that the king should reveal the names of his traducers. After Vishtaspa

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had given his royal word, Zoroaster prayed and then pulled out one after the other the legs of the royal steed. Zoroaster now reached the pinnacle of fame. Vishtaspa seated him on a golden throne and listened while the sage read to him and his assembled people, the pearls of wisdom garnered in the Zend Avesta.*

It so happened that at this time there lived in India a most learned Brahman Changragacha (Chandragupta ?) He was greatly concerned to hear that Zoroaster had perverted, to use his opprobrious phrase, the mind of king Vishtaspa. He wrote to the king a letter in which he implored him to drive away the impostor and return to the true faith. Vishtaspa, in turn, invited Changragacha to visit his court and hear the gospel of Zoroaster. The Brahman anchorite joyfully accepted the challenge. For two years he ransacked night and day the wisest books in all India for unanswerable riddles with which to dumbfound Zoroaster. Having collected a number of utterly insoluble questions, he called to him the wisest men of Hindustan and in their company journeyed to Balkh. Vishtaspa received Changragacha in a manner worthy alike of the king and the sage. But the contest between the Brahman and Zoroaster was soon over. The latter answered the insoluble problems one after the other from the pages of the Zend Avesta. The Brahman was as generous as he was learned. He at once owned the

* This passage is taken from Anquetil du Perron and the Zarathust-nama. Other authorities declare that Hutoshi was first converted and afterwards won over her husband. The story of Changragacha comes from the Çhangragacha-nama and was adopted by Anquetil du Perron.

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superior wisdom of Zoroaster and with the wise men of Hindustan accepted his teaching and returned to India to preach it.

In spite of Zoroaster's victory over the Brahman and his innumerable miracles, Arjat Aspa or Arjasp, the king of Turan, denounced his divine mission. In vain Vishtaspa offered to surrender to Arjat Aspa fertile provinces if he turned to the true faith and threatened to trample him in the dust, if he persisted in his infidelity. Arjat Aspa met bribe and threat alike with haughty disdain and led a large army into Iran. Vishtaspa would have sued for peace, but Zoroaster bade him fear nothing. In the ensuing battle, Vishtaspa was victorious, chiefly through the valour of his son Isfandiar. Arjat Aspa and his shattered army fled in dismay to their own country. Unhappily Vishtaspa quarrelled with his son Infandiar and flung him into prison. Arjat Aspa again invaded Iran. He defeated Vishtaspa in the field and besieged him in a mountain stronghold. Another army stormed Balkh, destroyed the fire temples, killed the priests and quenched the holy fire. A villainous Turk named Turbaratur entered Zoroaster's oratory and on Khurshed, the 11th day of the month Ardibihist, slew him. The prophet, as he fell, flung his rosary at the miscreant and there issued from it a mighty flame which consumed him utterly. In the last straits Vishtaspa ordered Isfandiar's release. The prince once more restored the fortunes of the battle. He joined his father, defeated the Turanians and slew their king Arjat Aspa.

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Zoroaster was 77 years and 40 days old when he died. He married three times. By the first wife he had a son Esedvaster and three daughters. By his second wife he had two sons—Orovervizah, the chief of workers in the field, and Khushidchehr, a great warrior. By his third wife Huovi he had three sons, whose birth was still said to have been delayed in a miraculous way. In due time they will appear as saviours of mankind. In the lifetime of the last the whole world will embrace Zoroaster's teaching. Then will come the resurrection.

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CHAPTER III.

The Parsi Religion.

IT is gross impertinence in a foreigner of another creed to try to expound in a single chapter a religion, at least three thousand years old. But as my only object is to try to enable my own community to understand something of their next door neighbours, I trust my impertinence, and above all my errors, will be forgiven me.

At some remote period of their history the Persians like their Indian cousins would seem to have worshipped Vedic deities. Mitra the sun, Vayu the wind, Ushas the dawn and many other deified forces of nature received their worship. It was true that Gayomart, the first man, had heard the divine laws from the very lips of the Supreme Being; but his successors from time to time fell away from grace and it was left to Zoroaster to win mankind from the worship of nature to the adoration of Ahura Mazda only.

Ahura is the same as the common Indian word Asura, which means a demon, whereas the Persian demon is known by the Indian word for god—Deva. Mazda is an Iranian word which means wisdom. Thus Ahura Mazda means as Christians might say, The All Wise. It was his supremacy over all the universe and all creation that Zoroaster preached; and this doctrine is still accepted by Parsis to-day. They have, however,

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gradually turned the word Ahura Mazda into Ormazd. Mazda dwells in the highest heaven Garonmana or Ahura the Abode of Praise. Three lower heavens exist, Humata (good thoughts), Hukhta (good words) and Hvarshta (good deeds). Sometimes the four heavens are grouped together under the name of Vahishta Ahu or best existence : but in Garonmana alone dwell Ahura Mazda, his retinue and those human souls who have reached perfection. There is nothing anthropomorphic about Ahura Mazda. He has never become man like Christ or Krishna. But the Christian Holy Ghost finds a close parallel in Spenta Mainyu, the Holy Spirit. Besides Spenta Mainyu, who is an emanation from Ahura Mazda rather than a separate entity, the All Wise has numerous agents through whom he makes known or enforces his divine will. The chief of these are the six Amesha Spentas who correspond closely with the seven Archangels of Christianity. They are Vohu Mana (Good Mind), Asha Vahishta (Righteousness), Kshathra Vairya (Wished for Kingdom), Armaiti (Devotion), Haurvatat (Perfection) and Ameretat (Immortality). Vohu Mana as befitted the chief Archangel of an agricultural community was the guardian spirit of cattle. Kshathra Vairya was the embodiment of the sovereign majesty of Ahura Mazda.

Below the six Archangels are countless other angels (Yazatas or Izads) of whom only a few seem to have separate names. Of these the chief is Sraosha or the angel of religious obedience. Next comes Atar or the angel of the all purifying fire. Ashi is the angel of

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piety. Geush Tashan is the spirit that watches over the animal kingdom. Mithra is the angel of light. Ardvi Sura Anahita, commonly called Avan Izad, is the angel of running water. The existence of evil at the same time as an all powerful all holy Supreme Being has always been the great difficulty of religious thinkers. Judaism solved the difficulty by attributing it to Satan—a malignant angel who rebelled against God. Although defeated and driven into Hell, he still has power to lead mankind into sin. Christianity and Islam followed Judaism. Mazdaism answered the riddle somewhat differently. Below Ahura Mazda are not only a band of Archangels and angels, but also a similar band of evil spirits. At the head of the latter and opposed to Spenta Mainyu is Angra Mainyu or Ahriman, the enemy *par excellence*. He is co-existent with Spenta Mainyu, but he is not co-eternal. Spenta Mainyu has never yet exerted his full strength against Angra Mainyu. When he does Angra Mainyu will be destroyed and evil will vanish. Below Angra Mainyu come his infernal crew the Devas. Of these Aka Mana or the evil mind balances Vohu Mana. Druj or wickedness balances Asha. Aeshma balances Sraosha.

Like other faiths Mazdaism has tried to pierce beyond the grave and this is what it tells its followers. Death is the invention of Angra Mainyu and no man is free from it. When men dies, his soul is released from its earthly prison, but the process of its departure to the other world is a gradual one lasting three whole nights and days. Then the soul is accom-

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panied by its Fravashi or guardian spirit to the Chinvat bridge that leads alike to heaven, Hamistagan corresponding somewhat to purgatory and hell. Its entrance is guarded by the angel Meher Davar. By his side are the angelic assessors Rashna and Astad, who stand for justice and truth. They judge all comers weighing their acts both good and evil, together with the accumulated interest thereon. For according to the Zoroastrian tenets the value of both meritorious and evil actions increases with years. It is thus better to do a good act in early youth than in old age. The souls of the truly pious have no difficulty. They cross the Chinvat bridge, gradually pass through the lower heavens until they reach Garonmana. There they are welcomed by Vohu Mana and bidden to dwell eternally with Ahura Mazda. Those who have been neither very pious nor very wicked pass over the Chinvat bridge to Hamistagan. There, uncomfortable but untormented, they await the resurrection. The very wicked find their way to one or other of the four Hells, Dushmata or Evil Thought, Dushukta or Evil Word, Dushvarshta or Evil Deed, Anagra Temah or Endless Darkness. "There they reap in incessant tears the crop they have sown in the finite world."

To release the world from the power of Angra Mainyu, Ahura Mazda will send the three sons of Zoroaster, whose birth, as I have already said, has been miraculously delayed. Their names are Hoshedar, Hoshedar-Mah and Soshyos, and they will appear at intervals of a thousand years. During the lifetime of the last,

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Soshyos, pain, disease and even death will vanish and the dead will rise from their graves. Angra Mainyu, however, will not submit tamely to the new order of things. He and his demons will fight against Ahura Mazda, but will all be slain. The All Wise will again judge mankind. Those in Purgatory will be at once admitted to Paradise. Those in Hell will be sentenced to three days' final punishment, but at last they, too, will be permitted to join the elect and to enjoy eternal happiness.

Such is the theoretical side of the Parsi religion. The practical side is no less admirable. It has been simply and clearly set forth in Dr. Modi's Catechism of the Parsi religion. The Parsi's faith points out to him his duty not only towards God, but towards his neighbour and towards himself. He is taught to believe (1) in the existence of the All Wise, (2) in the life hereafter, (3) in his own full responsibility for his thoughts, words and actions. The responsibility of mankind for their deeds is deeply impressed on the Parsi child. It is told always that a man's happiness in this world and in the next depends on his *manashni, gavashni* and *kunashni*—his thoughts, words and deeds. They are the materials with which he must build his life. He must learn from his earliest years to praise Humata, Hukhta, Hvarshta—good thoughts, good words and good actions. If they are good, all will be well with him. He must be pure and clean both in body and mind. He should live in peace not only with his neighbours and co-religionists, but also towards those of other faiths

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and even if possible with his enemies. He should love, honour and obey his parents, his teachers and his elders. He should be ready to sacrifice himself for the good of others. He should be kind to dumb animals; for they as well as himself are the children of the great father Ahura Mazda. Lastly, he should reverence the Sun, the Moon, the Stars, the Mountains, the Rivers and above all Fire, as manifestations and symbols of the Omnipotence of the Creator.

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CHAPTER IV.

The Zend Avesta.

PROBABLY the treasure most esteemed by the Parsi exiles was their MSS. copy of the Zend Avesta. The original Zend Avesta resembled the Old Testament in that it contained a variety of books—no less than twenty-one on different subjects. What the exiles took with them to India seems to have been such part of the holy book, as was used in the liturgy and daily prayers. It consisted of the following parts :—

1. The Yasna or Book of Prayers referring to sacrifices with its supplement the Visparad.

2. The Khordeh Avesta or the smaller Avesta which included the following :

(*a*) The five Gahs, *i. e.*, the five prayers for the five periods of the day, *viz.*, early morning, mid-day, afternoon, night and midnight.

(*b*) The five Niyaishes or litanies in praise of the five beneficent objects in nature, *i.e.*, the sun Khurshed, physical light in general and moral light in particular (Mithra), the moon (Mah), water represented by Ardvisura and Fire.

(*c*) The Yashts or the collection of prayers in praise of the Yazatas or Angles.

(*d*) The Afringans or Afrins, prayers invoking God's help to the dead and blessings on the living.

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3. The Vendidad (lit. what is given to withstand evil). It is a code of laws religious, social and criminal, and includes one chapter that refers to the countries into which Mazdaism had spread.

The name Zend Avesta meant the bible (Avesta) and its recognised commentaries. It was written in an ancient language formerly miscalled Zend, but now known as the language of the Avesta. It was akin to Sanskrit and had a close affinity to the tongue in which were written the inscriptions of the Achæmenian kings. Part of this work had been translated into Pehlvi, the language of the Sassanide kings; but until the eighteenth century it was unknown to European scholars. Many classical writers, however, from Herodotus onwards had collected valuable information about the ancient Persian customs and religion.

The first attempt to solve the riddle of the Parsi faith was made by Thomas Hyde of Oxford. His book appeared in 1700 A.D. It was called Veterum Persarum et Parthorum et Medorum religionis Historia. The author unfortunately could not read the original Zend Avesta, so his work was based entirely on the works of classical writers and some Persian writers. Its small value was recognised by the author himself. He urged men of learning to go to India and procure at all costs there the holy works of the Parsis. In 1718 a Surat merchant George Bourcher was given by the Parsis a copy of the Vendidad Sade manuscript made in 1681 A.D. In 1723 A.D. one Richard Cobbe took the copy to England and gave it to the Bodleian library at Oxford.

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No one there could read it, so the authorities were content to fasten it by a chain to the nearest wall.

In 1754 a young Frenchman named Anquetil du Perron chanced to see a reproduction of a few sheets of this work in a Paris library. Young Anquetil formed the noble resolve of going to India and learning there to solve the riddle of the unknown tongue. His parents would never have consented, so confiding only in his brother he enlisted as a private soldier in the Army of the French East India Company. He marched for ten days with other recruits across France to Lorient, the port of embarkation. He was not, however, destined to endure the hardships of a journey to India as a common soldier. At Lorient he learnt that the King of France has bestowed on him a yearly pension of 500 francs and that the Company had allotted him a free passage to Pondicherry. His vessel the Duc d'Aquitaine weighed anchor on 24th February 1755 and reached Pondicherry on the 10th August of the same year.

At Pondicherry Anquetil du Perron was kindly received by the Governor M. de Leyrit, who raised his pension at first to 1,900 francs a year, about seventy rupees a month and later to 2,880 francs a year, about 100 rupees a month. From Pondicherry Du Perron went to Jinji and started the study of Indian languages. To cure a fever which he had contracted at Jinji he set sail for Chandernagore. At the same time, namely April 1756, he sent in a letter to M. Le Verrier, the representative of the French company at Surat, a few lines of Persian written in the characters of the Zend Avesta.

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Reaching Chandernagore on the 22nd April 1756, he was cheered by an answer from M. Le Verrier. The latter had shewn Du Perron's letter to the Parsi priests of Surat and they had promised to interpret to him their sacred books. Du Perron was now all on fire to reach Surat. But he had many hardships to suffer before he reached the land of his desire. The Nawab of Bengal had taken Calcutta from the English and Clive was marching on Chandernagore, to punish the French for the aid given by them to the Nawab. Du Perron intent only on translating the Zend Avesta, left Chandernagore on the 9th March 1757. By doing so he incurred the charge of cowardice. The charge was unjust. But it was not strange that his comrades, indifferent to his ambitions, should have attributed to fear an act, prompted only by a desire for knowledge. Du Perron reached Kassimbazar on the 12th March where M. Law, the brother of the famous speculator of the Regency, was Governor. But the English took Chandernagore and the garrison, who thereafter joined M. Law, commented with such asperity on Du Perron's flight in the face of the enemy that Du Perron had to leave Kassimbazar. The unlucky traveller decided to return on foot to Pondicherry. Eventually he secured a horse and rode as far as Pulikat, which he reached after many adventures on the 31st July 1757. From Pulikat he went by sea to Pondicherry. On reaching it he found there his brother, who had been appointed to a post in the French establishment at Surat. The bureaucrat took charge of the young savant.

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Nevertheless Du Perron did not reach Surat until the 1st May 1758. Du Perron had thus taken more than three years to reach his real destination. Ill with dysentery, it was some time before he could set himself to his task. When he did, he found invaluable help in two Parsi priests, Darab and Kaous. They first made for him a copy of the Zend Avesta. But Du Perron's impatience to learn led him to think that the two priests accustomed to the dilatory methods of Indian teaching were too slow. They wished, he said, to keep him at the alphabet for a whole year. But, according to his own account, the brilliant Frenchman learnt so quickly that he was soon able to decipher the text without their assistance. Fearing that he might seek other aid than theirs, they became more reasonable and adapted their methods to his. On the 30th March 1759 Du Perron began his translation of the Vendidad. Unhappily a quarrel which he had with another Frenchman in the streets of Surat interrupted his labours. He received five sword wounds and was confined for a month to his room. But if his high spirit sometimes led the young Gaul into trouble, he seems to have been proof against all amorous temptations. Opposite the house in which he lived was that of a rich Moghul, whose two pretty wives were much interested in the young foreigner. One day an aged Duenna appeared at their window and called across the street to Du Perron. She asked him where his wife was. The young man replied that he had none. This reply drew to the window the pretty young wives. They asked him why

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he had come and what he was doing. Finally the Duenna invited him to visit their house that very night "ratko ao". The prudent Frenchman played the ungrateful role of St. Joseph. He declined the gracious invitation and applied himself to his task with a zeal more unsparing than ever.

By the 18th November 1760 the tireless scholar had finished his task. Anxious to take to France his store of literary wealth, he wished to return home. Just at this time the arms of France suffered a series of disasters. At last came the news of the siege and fall of Pondicherry. Du Perron could no longer hope to secure a passage on a French ship. He had to throw himself on the mercy of the English. On the 15th March 1761 Du Perron sailed for Bombay from Surat. On the 28th April 1761 he sailed on an English ship for Europe. The captain, a certain Quicke, gave the poor Frenchman food so bad that for a whole month he could eat nothing. Then, however, the sea air put so keen an edge on his appetite that he ate everything offered to him ; and the sordid Quicke saw with dismay his stores disappear before the onslaught of his starving passenger. On the 17th November 1761, the ship cast anchor in Portsmouth harbour. On the 15th March 1762, du Perron deposited in the royal library at Paris no less than 80 manuscripts. To use his own words "I had passed nearly eight years outside my country and nearly six in India. I returned in 1762 poorer than when I left Paris in 1754. But I was rich in rare and ancient monuments, in knowledge, that my youth (for I was barely thirty)

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gave me time to utilise at leisure; and that was the only fortune that I had gone to India to seek".

It was not, however, until 1771 that Du Perron's work appeared in print. The intervening years he spent in sorting and arranging his materials. His work was in three volumes. The first described in detail his voyages and adventures. The second contained a life of Zoroaster and a translation of the Vendidad. The third volume contained the rest of the Zend Avesta, a vocabulary of Pehlvi and of the Avesta language; and a study of Parsi civil and religious customs. The publication of Du Perron's work produced in France a profound sensation, but in England it was bitterly attacked. Sir William Jones in a pamphlet written in good although not perfect French* tried to shew that either du Perron was an impostor or that he had been duped by impostors. Other English writers followed suit. But Du Perron had the truth on his side and was bound to conquer. In 1825 the omnivorous intellect of Eugene Burnouf led that remarkable man to examine the Zend Avesta. His deep knowledge of Sanskrit enabled him to throw a fresh light on the ancient tongue of the Avesta and to correct Du Perron's errors. At the same time it enabled him to prove that his countryman was no impostor. Thereafter the authenticity of Du Perron's work has never been doubted. In 1892 M. Darmesteter in his great work on the Avesta reviewed the whole subject. Finally Parsi scholars came forward to give to the world the principles of their

* In one place Sir William Jones uses recouvrir instead of recouvrer.

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belief. In 1914 Dr. Dhalla, who was at once a high priest of the Parsis and a consummate master of the English language, disclosed in his work "Zoroastrian Theology" the doctrines and the faith that for three thousand years have sustained the worshippers of Ahura Mazda.

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CHAPTER V.

Parsi Marriage Customs.

UNLIKE certain Christian and Hindu sects, the followers of Ahura Mazda have never scorned marriage. It is a cardinal point in the faith of every true Zoroastrian, that he shall marry and raise a family. Ahura Mazda prefers the man who lives a life of marital happiness to one who lives in continence. Whoso does not marry and propagate lineage hinders the work of Renovation and is wicked. Marriage is doubly an obligation, being a religious duty to the church and a civic duty to the state. Hence both the church and the state encouraged married life in Iran. It is considered a highly meritorious form of charity to help a poor man to marry.* In the third century A.D. was born a certain Mani. He founded the religion known as Manichæanism, drawing his materials from Zoroastrianism, Buddhism, Christianity and Syrian Gnosticism. He preached celibacy and fasting austerities and asceticism. After a prolonged struggle, in the course of which Mani was flayed alive and his skin stuffed with straw, the common sense of the Persians decided in favour of Zoroastrianism. The doctrines of Mani were driven from the East and found their last resting place in France. There they formed the creed of the Albigensian heretics, so ruthlessly suppressed by the sword-arm of De Montford.

* Dhalla, p. 215, Zoroastrian Theology.

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Marriage as ordained by Ahura Mazda, deserves to be celebrated, in the opinion of the Parsis, as splendidly as the means of the parties permit. The assembly, summoned to witness the marriage, is called the Shahjan or the assembly for the queenly bride. To the wedding comes the bridegroom dressed in a loose flowing dress full of folds, known as the Jama Pichori or Sayah. The bride's sari is similarly loose and flowing. In his hand the bridegroom carries a shawl, the emblem of greatness. On his forehead he has a mark of red pigment known as kanku, long and vertical. The mark represents a ray of the sun. On the bride's forehead is a round red mark, a symbol of the moon, the sun's eternal helpmate. Both wear garlands of flowers round their necks. The bridegroom is hailed as the king of the day, the *vâr raja*, the bride as *kanya* or the loving one, from the Avesta root *kan* to love. The bridegroom enters the room first that all may know, that it is he who ardently desires the bride and not she him. A little later the bride enters. The bridegroom seats himself on the right hand of the bride, the seat of honour. On each side of them are placed trays of rice, symbols of wealth and plenty. Near the bride and bridegroom are their marriage witnesses, who correspond to the Christian ' best man ' and ' bridesmaids' save that they are all men. And the Zoroastrian bridegroom and bride, honouring marriage as they do, prefer their marriage witnesses to be married and not single.

The marriage ritual is now about to begin. The bride and bridegroom take seats opposite to each other, but

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a piece of cloth is held between them, so as to hide the one from the other. In their left hands are put grains of rice. Underneath the cloth the senior officiating priest—there are always two—puts the right hand of the one inside the other's and unites them with the recital of the sacred Ahunavar formula and seven strands of raw twist. After fastening their hands the priest passes the raw twist seven times round the pair. For the raw twist may be easily broken when single, but can only be broken with difficulty, when sevenfold. The officiating priests pass a piece of cloth round the chairs so as to enclose them inside. For the circle stands for unity. The ends of the cloth also are tied together with the recital of the Ahunavar formula. The knots in the cloth are the symbol of the marriage knot. At this point a servant throws frankincense on a fire burning in a firepot. At once bride and bridegroom throw at each other the rice in their left hands. He or she whose rice hits the other first will be, so it is believed, the more loving. The parents and relatives of both await eagerly the result of the contest. The curtain is now dropped and the boy and girl sit beside instead of opposite each other; for they who were formerly separate are now joined together.

The preliminaries are now over and the religious part of the ceremony begins. The senior priest takes his stand in front of the bridegroom, the junior before the bride. The senior priest then recites the following benediction.

" May the Creator, the Omniscient Lord, grant you a

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progeny of sons and grandsons, heart ravishing friendship, bodily strength, long life and an existence of 150 years."

Then the senior priest asks the bridegroom's marriage witness the following question :—

"In the presence of this assembly that has met together in town (so and so) on date (so and so) of the month (so and so) of the year (so and so) of the emperor Yazdagird of the Sassanian dynasty of auspicious Iran, say whether you have agreed to take this maiden by name (so and so) in marriage with this bridegroom in accordance with the rites of the Mazdayacnians, promising to pay her 2,000 dirams of pure white silver and two dinars of real gold of Nishapore coinage ?"

The witness answers : " I have agreed."

Next, the senior priest asks the bride's marriage witness—

" Have you and your family with righteous mind and truthful thoughts, words and actions, and for the increase of righteousness agreed to give for ever, the bride in marriage to (so and so)?"

The witness answers : " I have agreed."

The senior priest then asks both bride and bridegroom:

" Have you preferred to enter into this contract of marriage up to the end of your life with righteous mind?"

Both reply : " I have preferred."

The priests then address the couple, advising them as to their conduct, praying to God to confer upon them the moral and social virtues which belong to the thirty

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Yazatas from whom the Parsi days of the month are called and blessing them, that they may be blessed with the virtues and nobility of the heroes of ancient Iran.

The ceremony ends with the recital of the *tandarusti* prayer,—a form of final benediction.

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CHAPTER VI.

Birth Ceremonies.

ACCORDING to Mr. Karaka, the young Parsi lady who is to become a mother, receives when she is five months advanced in pregnancy, a new dress from her mother-in-law. She puts it on and goes to the house of her parents, where she receives another. When her pregnancy is seven months advanced, she performs the Agharni ceremony. On an auspicious day, her mother-in-law dresses the wife in a new dress and sends to the house of the wife's parents a present of fish, curds, milk and sugar. The young lady's parents add to the mother-in-law's present similar gifts of their own and return the whole, which is then utilised for a mid-day feast. That afternoon the wife stands on a flat wooden stool two or three inches high, inside a room facing east. The floor of the room is ornamented with drawings of fish, birds and animals. The wife is clothed in a new dress and a mark of "Kanku" or red powder is made on her forehead. In the fold of her *sari* near her breast, a cocoanut, some betel leaves, some dates and other dry fruits are placed. With these still in her *sari*, the wife goes to her parent's house, accompanied by relatives and friends. They carry with them wheat and sweetmeats in baskets. Her mother receives her at the threshold, throws rice over her and breaks a cocoanut and an egg. The bride then crosses the threshold, right foot first and goes to the

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room where she will be confined. With a light in one hand and a cup of water in the other, she goes round the room seven times, sprinkling the floor with water each time. She does this to ensure that her children may never experience either darkness or drought. The wife's mother takes from her daughter the clothes she is wearing and gives her new ones in exchange. She puts sugar between her lips and sends her back to her husband's house with more wheat and sweetmeats. After an interval of some days the wife's mother sends by some ladies of her house a present of cloth, of rings and shawls to the husband. In return for the present, the husband entertains the ladies, who recite or sing songs suitable to the auspicious occasion.*

As the confinement draws near, the mother-in-law gives the wife some little money and a cocoanut, puts a small mark of red powder on her forehead and sends her to her mother's house, where she occupies for her confinement the room already chosen and consecrated therefor. On the day of her delivery the mother-in-law goes to visit her daughter-in-law, puts on her bed a few rupees and some dry rice. The wife's mother then gives the husband's mother a dinner and a new dress. Next day the husband's mother distributes sweetmeats among their respective relations and friends.

The date of the baby's appearance in the world is carefully noted. On the fifth day after birth the wife's parents send a dinner called a " bhona" to the husband's

* I am informed by Dr. Modi that much of the above ceremonial has now fallen into disuse.

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family. On the night of the sixth day the child's destiny is supposed to be settled by the powers above. A tray containing a sheet of blank paper, a pen, ink, a cocoanut and red powder are placed near the mother's bed. In the night a heavenly messenger is supposed to write on the paper the child's future. But as the writing is invisible, knowledge of the infant's destiny is withheld from the anxious parents. Some days later a " joshi " or astrologer is sent for. He enquires the exact hour, minute and second of the baby's arrival. Having learnt this he ascertains the stars under whose influence the child is born and gives out the names that are suitable to a child so situated. From these names the parents choose one for their offspring. One of the ladies present asks the astrologer questions about the child's furture. The astrologer like a wise man predicts all manner of good fortune for it. A few days later he sends a fully prepared horoscope, for which he receives in return a fee.

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CHAPTER VII.

The Naojote Ceremony.

THE Parsi child is not born a full member of the Zoroastrian religion. He can only become so by a ceremony known as the Naojote from Nao-new and jote-one who offers prayers. This ceremony is not confined to the male child only like the thread ceremony of the Hindus. It therefore resembles more closely the Christian confirmation. The Parsi child is initiated as a full member of its church at any time between the age of seven and fifteen. Below seven it is not deemed of sufficient understanding. If the ceremony is postponed until after fifteen, there is a danger that it may fall into sin.

The occasion is an important and solemn one. Shortly before it the child bathes in consecrated water. The child is then taken into a room, wherein are gathered friends and relatives, and is seated in front of the officiating priest. The latter puts in its hand the sacred shirt or *sudrah* with which he will shortly clothe it. Every part of the *sudrah* is deeply symbolical. It is made of white cambric because white stands for innocence and purity. It is made of two parts, front and back. The front should remind the child of its forefathers, the back of its duty to its descendants in the years to come. A little below the throat is the girehban, a small pocket to remind the child that besides the pockets in which it

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should store wealth, there is at least one pocket in which it should store righteousness. After the priest has put in the child's hand the shirt, he recites the *patet* or prayer of repentance and the child recites it after him or recites the Ahunavar prayer. The priest and child both rise and the priest calls upon the child to make a declaration of faith which he does in the following words :

" Praised be the most righteous, the wisest, the most holy and the best Mazdayaçnian Law, which is the gift of Mazda. The good, the true and perfect religion which God has sent to this world is that, which the prophet Zoroaster has brought here. That religion is the religion of Zoroaster, the religion of Ahura Mazda, communicated to the Holy Zoroaster."

The declaration ends with the prayer called the Ashem Vohu which runs thus : " Righteousness is the best gift and happiness. Happiness to him who is righteous for the sake of righteousness."

The declaration finished, the priest puts on the child the sacred shirt.

The next stage is to invest the child with the kusti or sacred thread. The thread is as deeply symbolical as the shirt. The kusti is made of the wool of a lamb, the symbol of innocence. It is made of 72 threads grouped into six parts, each of twelve threads. The 72 threads symbolize the 72 chapters of the Yasna, an important part of the Parsi liturgy. At each end of the thread are three laris or tassels each of 24 threads. The 24 threads stand for the 24 sections of the Visperad or liturgical prayer. The six parts of the kusti symbolize

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the six religious duties of the Zoroastrian. The twelve threads in each part stand for the twelve months in the year. The six laris or tassels correspond with the six Parsi seasons. The kusti is turned inside out by means of a needle to symbolize the passage of the soul from the material to the spiritual world. The union of all the threads in one stands for the universal union or brotherhood of man. The thread is worn round the waist like a belt. This implies that the wearer has girt himself to do his master's bidding.

The priest now takes his stand behind the child. If it is morning both face the east; if it is evening both face the west. Both recite the following prayer and as they recite it the priest ties on the child the sacred thread:

" The Omniscient Lord is the greatest Lord. Ahriman is the evil spirit that keeps back the advancement of the world. May that evil spirit with all his accomplices remain fallen and dejected. Omniscient Lord! I repent of all my sins. I repent of all the evil I may have thought, all the evil words I may have spoken, all the evil acts I may have committed. May Ahura Mazda be praised! May Ahriman the evil spirit be condemned! The will of the righteous is the most worthy of praise."

The Zoroastrian, save when bathing, should always wear the sacred thread and shirt. But he unties and regirds his sacred thread several times a day (1) on rising in the morning, (2) after ablutions, (3) before saying his prayers, (4) after his bath, (5) after meals. When regirding the thread the Parsi should always turn towards the light—by day towards the sun, at night towards the moon.

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or a lamp. He passes the knot three times round the waist, tying it with one knot in front and one behind. A knot symbolizes resolution. Thus while tying each knot, he should resolve always to attend to " good thoughts, good words and good deeds."

After the child has been invested with the sacred thread and shirt, he recites with the priest the articles of the Zoroastrian faith :

" O Almighty come to my help ! I am a worshipper of God. I am a Zoroastrian worshipper of God. I agree to praise the Zoroastrian religion and to believe in that religion. I praise good thoughts, good words and good actions. I praise the good Mazdayaçnian religion, which curtails discussions and quarrels, which brings about kinship and brotherhood, which is holy. Of all the religions that have yet flourished and are likely to flourish in the future, it is the greatest and best, the most excellent and is the religion given by God to Zoroaster I believe that all good things proceed from God. May the Mazdayaçnian religion be thus praised."

The ceremony is now over and the priest by reciting the Tandarusti or benediction invokes on the new initiate the blessings of God. He asks on his behalf for health, long life and splendid piety. " May," he continues, " the Yazatas and the Amesha Spentas come to your help. May the religion of Zoroaster flourish! O Almighty God! Bestow long life, joy and health on the ruler of the land, upon our community and upon this child ! May he live long to help the virtuous ! May his days, months and years be auspicious ! May he for many years lead a

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holy, charitable and religious life! May he do righteous deeds! May health, virtue and goodness be his lot! May all his good wishes be fulfilled like those of the immortal angels!"

The officiating priest and the other priests now receive their fees. Flowers are given to the assembled guests. They take their leave. Their presence is no longer needed, for the child is now a full member of the church of Zoroaster.

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CHAPTER VIII.

Funeral Ceremonies.

FROM the earliest times the Iranian method of disposing of their dead has excited the interest and curiosity of their neighbours. The bodies of the early Persian kings were not exposed, but encased in wax and buried in the earth. The practice of exposing the dead originated, according to Dr. Dhalla, among the Medes. When the Magi, the Zoroastrian priests of the Medes, became after Cyrus's conquest the priests also of the Persians, they introduced the Median funeral practices. The Vendidad refers to these practices; and whatever their origin, they are now so firmly rooted among the Parsis, that nothing would induce that community to abandon them. Indeed they claim with considerable justice that their is the most hygienic manner of ridding themselves of a human body, deserted by its living spirit.

When a Parsi is on the point of death two priests are sent for. They and the dying man, if he can, recite together the Patet or prayer of repentance. A short time before death a few drops of consecrated Haoma water are dropped by the priests into the dying man's mouth. After death the deceased's body is washed all over and clothed in a suit of white cotton. The kusti or sacred thread is girded round the body by a relative. The body is placed on a clean white cotton cloth and the dead man's relatives come to say farewell to it.

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From that time on, no one but the professional corpse-disposers are allowed to touch it. They cover the whole body with cloth, leaving only the face uncovered, lift it on to stone slabs specially placed in a corner of the room. The hands are crossed and care is taken that the head should not point to the north, the quarter of the heavens most hateful to the Iranians. Round the slabs three circles are drawn to mark off the temporary resting place of the dead. A dog is brought to look at the body and a firepot full of fragrant wood is kept burning in the room. Near it, but at least three paces from the dead body, sits a priest who recites passages from the Zend Avesta.

If the death has taken place early in the night, the body is removed next morning. If it has taken place late at night or early in the morning, it is removed in the evening. In the case of accidental deaths a longer period is allowed. An hour before the time fixed for the removal of the body to the Tower of Silence or Dakhma, two corpse bearers (Nasa-salars), clothed in white enter the house, holding a "paiwand" or cotton cloth between them and carrying an iron bier called a "gehan"; for wood, being liable to retain infection, is not used in Parsi funeral ceremonies. The corpse bearers put the bier by the dead body and recite half the prayer known as the "Sraosh Baj" and then say the following words "We do this, according to the dictates of Ahura Mazda, the dictates of the Amesha Spentas, of the holy Sraosh, of Adarbad Marespand and the dictates of the Dastur of the age." Other prayers

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follow, a dog is again shewn the dead body and the friends and relatives again bid the body farewell. They bow to it and its face is covered up. The body is now fastened to a bier and taken out of the house and then another set of corpse bearers lift it up and set out, followed by the mourners clothed in white. They walk two and two united by a cotton cloth to the Towers of Silence. When the bier reaches the Tower enclosure it is put on the ground, and the Nasasalars uncover the dead man's face. The mourners look on it for the last time. Once again the body is shown to a dog. It is then lifted by the corpse bearers and taken to the Tower to be devoured by vultures. There, it is stripped of most of its clothes. The Nasasalars on leaving the Tower throw the cotton sheet in which the body had been wrapped into a pit. There, it is destroyed by sulphuric acid. The mourners now recite the second half of the "Sraosh Baj" and at its close the following short prayer.

"We repent of all our sins. Our repects to you O Souls of the Departed. We remember here the souls of the dead who have the spirits of the holy."

The mourners wash their faces and hands and pray to God to forgive the deceased his sins. Then all return to their homes and bathe before returning to their ordinary duties. But their obligations to the dead have not yet ceased. The deceased's soul is believed to linger by its earthly tenement for three days. It is under the special protection of the angel Sraosh and him the deceased's relatives implore to help and pro-

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tect the dead man's soul. This is especially so on the dawn of the third day. Then his soul is being judged by Meher Davar on the Chinvat bridge. On the result of that judgment the deceased's happiness or misery depends. Sums of money according to the position of the deceased are given in charity by his relatives and heirs; and this generosity is often repeated every year upon the anniversary of his death. Long before this, however, his body has been devoured by the birds of the air—the sooner the better, for thereby a source of infection and pollution is removed. The bare bones of the skeleton, when dried by the sun, fall or are removed from the platform of the tower into a central well. They gradually crumble to dust. The dust is in turn washed by rainwater into four underground drains at the base of the tower and disappear. But at the end of each drain are double sets of filters that purify the rainwater before it enters the ground. For one of the chief tenets of the Zoroastrian religion is that "Mother Earth shall not be defiled."

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CHAPTER IX.

The Parsi Years, Months and Seasons.

IT was the practice of each Sassanide king of Persia to found an era from the date of his accession. He always, however, closed the first year of his era on the 31st March, the beginning of the solar year, as then calculated by the Persians. Since the last Sassanide king of Persia Yazdagird—and the Parsis have never recognised any of his successors as *de jure* rulers—began his reign on the 16th June A.D. 632, the present year of the Parsi era should be 1291. It is actually 1292. The difference is due to the absence of any intercalation since the death of Yazdagird. This brings us to an examination of the Parsi solar year.

The Parsis have twelve months each of thirty days. They are known as 1 Fravardin, 2 Artavahishta or Ardibihisht, 3 Haurvatat or Khordad, 4 Tir, 5 Ameretat or Amardad, 6 Sherivar, 7 Meher or Mitro, 8 Avan, 9 Adar, 10 Dae, 11 Vohuman or Behman, 12 Spendarmad. Each day of the month has a separate name—1 Ahura Mazda, 2 Behman, 3 Ardibihist, 4 Sherivar, 5 Spendarmad, 6 Khordad, 7 Amardad, 8 Depadar, 9 Adar, 10 Avan, 11 Khur or Khurshed, 12 Mohr (Mah), 13 Tir, 14 Gosh, 15 Depmehr, 16 Mehr or Mitro, 17 Srosh or Sarosh, 18 Rashnu, 19 Fravardin, 20 Behram, 21 Ram, 22 Guad (Vata), 23 Depdin, 24 Din, 25 Arad (Ashisang), 26 Ashtad, 27 Asman, 28 Jamyad or Zamyad, 29 Marespand, 30 Aneran.

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Thirty multiplied by twelve, however, only give a year of 360 days. To these therefore five more days, now known as *gathas* are added, because each one is named after one of the Gathas or holy hymns of Zoroaster. They are named: 1 Ahunvaiti, 2 Ushtavaiti, 3 Spenta Mainyu, 4 Vohu Khsathra, 5 Vasishtoishti. But the solar year consists of 365 days, 5 hours and 54 seconds. Europeans correct their year of 365 days by the addition or intercalation of a day in February every fourth year. The ancient Persians corrected it by the intercalation (kabisa) of a month every 120 years. After the down-fall of the Persian kingdom the Parsis omitted to intercalate, except once during their residence in Khorasan. This circumstance has led to a curious sectarian division. It was discovered that the Zoroastrians who had remained in Persia were a month in advance of the Parsis of India. The single intercalation made by the latter had not been made or at any rate adhered to by the former. Unhappily in 1736 A.D. a certain Irani Parsi named Jamshed introduced the system of the Persian Zoroastrians. He obtained a following who called themselves Kadmis or as we should say of the old faith. The Kadmis now begin their year a month earlier than the Indian Parsis, *i.e.*, in August instead of in September. In opposition to the Kadmis the other Parsis called themselves Shahanshahis. At one time the controversy was very bitter. The bitterness is now allayed. Kadmis and Shahanshahis still have separate Towers of Silence in Bombay, but they intermarry. As Mr. Karaka has pointed out,

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both sects are wrong. Had the old Persian system of intercalation been correctly maintained, the New Year would have begun neither in August nor in September but on the 21st March, the day of the vernal equinox.

The Parsi year is divided into six, not four seasons.

1. *Maidhyo-Zaremaya* (Pahl. Metokzaram) or mid spring, the 45th day from the vernal equinox. It commemorates the creation of Heaven (11th to the 15th of Ardibihisht.)

2. *Maidhhyoi Shema* (or Metokshema) mid-summer, the 105th day of the year. It commemorates the creation of water (11th-15th Tir.)

3. *Paitish-hahya* (Petishah), the 180th day of the year. It commemorates the creation of the earth (26th-30th Sherivar.)

4. *Ayathrema* (Ayasrim), the 210th day of the year It commemorates the creation of plants (26th-30th Meher.)

5. *Maidhyairiya* (Metyariya), the 290th day of the year (16th-20th Dae). It commemorates the creation of flocks and herds.

6. *Hamaspathmaedaya* (Hamaspadmedim), the 360th to the 365th day of the year and the farewell to winter. It consists of the five gatha days. It commemorates the creation of man. According to the Parsis, Gayomart or Gayamartan was the first created man or at any rate the first man who listened to the counsels of Ahura Mazda. The last man will be Soshyos. On Gayomart's departure from this world two-thirds of his virility was retained by the angel Nairyosang and one-third by Spendarmad

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(Mother Earth). Forty years later the first human pair Meschia and Meschiani sprang from Spendarmad.

The greatest festival of the Parsis is *Pateti*, their New Year's Day, on the Ahura Mazda or first day of their first month Fravardin. The day is celebrated much like the French New Year's day. The Parsis pray to Ahura Mazda in the morning and amuse themselves and exchange good wishes throughout the day. There are other festivals also.

Rapithvan was intended to mark the beginning of spring, but owing to the failure to intercalate the Rapithvan no longer comes at the correct time. It is celebrated on the third day of the first month.

Khordad Sal takes place on the 6th day Khordad of the month Fravardin. It is the anniversary of Zoroaster's birth and also of Ahura Mazda's revelation to him.

Atash Behram Salgari, on Sraosh Roz, the 17th day of the second month. It is the anniversary of the inauguration of the great fire temple built in Bombay by the sons of Hormasji Bamanji Wadia in their father's honour.

Jamshedi Naoroz. The vernal equinox when the sun enters Aries. This is the time the Parsi year should properly begin. The festival is named after the great king Jamshed of the Peshdadian dynasty.

Zarathusht no Diso, the 11th of the tenth month Dae. It is the anniversary of the death of Zoroaster at the age of 77.

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Muktad. It is celebrated on the last ten days of the Zoroastrian year and includes the Gatha days. Some continue the celebration for 18 days. They are dedicated to the spirits of the departed. They are believed to come, when righteously invoked, to the houses of their survivors for ten days and repeat the words "Who will praise us? Who will offer us a sacrifice? Who will meditate upon us? Whose name among us will be taken for invocation? Whose soul among us will be worshipped by you with a sacrifice?" These days are passed by the Parsis in prayers.

Amardad Sal, the day on which the Parsis seek enjoyment after the Muktad. It follows the Khordad Sal.

Besides the above the Parsis observe the day of the month which bears the same name as that of the day. These days are called Jashans (from yasna a religious rite). The most important of these Jashans are :—

1. *Jashan-i-Fravardian.* It is sacred to the Fravashis or guardian angels who watch over the dead. It is dedicated to the memory of the dead and Parsis pray for their good at the Towers of Silence.

2. *Jashan-i-Avan.* It is sacred to the angel Ardvisura Anahita, who presides over the waters.

3. *Jashan-i-Adargan.* It is sacred to the Fire.

4. *Jashan-i-Bahmangan.* It is dedicated to the animal kingdom. Parsis feed stray animals and the stricter Parsis abstain from animal flesh.

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CHAPTER X.

The Parsi Dress.

HERODOTUS in a passage, quoted by Mr. Karaka in his History of the Parsis, (Vol. I, p. 123) observed that of all nations the ancient Persians were most distinguished by their readiness to adopt foreign manners and customs. This characteristic has been retained by the Parsis. When they came to Gujarat, they adopted whole-heartedly the manners of the Hindus. They ate their meals squatting on the ground and their food was served to them on plantain leaves and in brass dishes. The sexes ate separately. They adopted outwardly the dress of their neighbours. The Parsi man wore as underclothing the sacred shirt, which reached to his knees. Over the shirt he wore a kind of sleeved vest with flaps, that fastened first on one side and then the other. Over the vest he wore a "dagli." It resembled exactly the long coat or "angarkha" of the Hindus. The material of the coat and vest varied according to the season. In the hot weather they were of white bleached shirting. In the monsoon and winter they were made of wool. In the towns the Parsis did not take to the dhotar. The poorer wore

I have to thank my friend Mr. Nadirshah of Karachi for his help in the preparation of this chapter.

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trousers of white shirting which reached as far as their calves, but no loin cloth under it. Well-to-do Parsis wore over their white trousers a second pair of trousers, made of red silk and embroidered at the edges. When they went to their offices, they often pulled off their silk trousers and hung them on pegs, just as in England a solicitor's clerk will take off his best coat and hang it up during working hours. In the villages, however, the dress of the Parsis was entirely Hindu. They wore long turbans like Ahmedabad banias, and dhotars and red shoes. According to the old Pahlavi and Persian books neither man nor woman ought to go bareheaded. The Parsis long observed this precept. Under their turban the men always wore skullcaps. The more orthodox wore their skullcaps in bed and in some cases tied them on, for fear that they might slip off during sleep.

Parsi women adopted no less completely the Hindu dress. They wore the petticoat of Gujarat, the choli or bodice over the bosom and the sari or mantilla. The sari was longer than that worn by the Hindu women and more prettily embroidered and of gayer colour. Under their sari and bodice the Parsi woman wore the sacred shirt and the sacred thread. But in the house they wore slippers; while their Hindu sisters, no matter what their rank, went bare foot. On their heads, they wore a picturesque headcloth known as the 'mathabana'. It had the same origin as the skullcap of the men and covered the head agreeably to the dictates of the ancient scriptures.

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The above garments served the Parsis for many hundred years. But the last half century has seen a complete change especially in Bombay. Parsis of both sexes now eat together after the manner and from the crockery of Europe. The Parsi gentleman's dress is completely anglicised and is undistinguishable from an Englishman's. The Parsi lady has exchanged the Hindu bodice and petticoat for the English bodice and English skirt. Instead of slippers she wears high heeled shoes. She has adopted stockings, stays and combinations. The 'mathabana' has departed at least from among the younger generation. But with admirable taste she has kept the sari. And nothing more piquantly attractive can be imagined than a comely Parsi girl with a mantilla over a fashionable French or English dress. Nevertheless below their English garments the Parsis of both sexes tenaciously cling to the under-garments of ancient Persia. Over her combinations the Parsi girl wears her sacred shirt and her sacred cord and the Parsi youth wears them under his Bond Street linen.

As is only to be expected, priestly and ceremonial dress has been preserved to a greater extent than that of the ordinary daily life. Parsi priests continue to wear full beards and to dress wholly in white. They still wear a turban of white shirting bound by themselves and in the house a skullcap of the same material; they also wear a long white coat and white trousers. On ceremonial occasions all Parsis wear white trousers and a long white coat reaching to their ankles, known as the "Jamah." It is tied round the waist by a long

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white cloth known as the " Pichodi ". Among ceremonial occasions is the funeral procession. The dead Parsi goes to his last resting place clothed in a " Jamah," white trousers and the sacred shirt and the holy "kusti."

(THE END.)

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Printed and published by H. W. Smith for Bennett, Coleman & Co., Ltd., at the Times of India Press, Bombay.—2292·29

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on 16 November, 2018